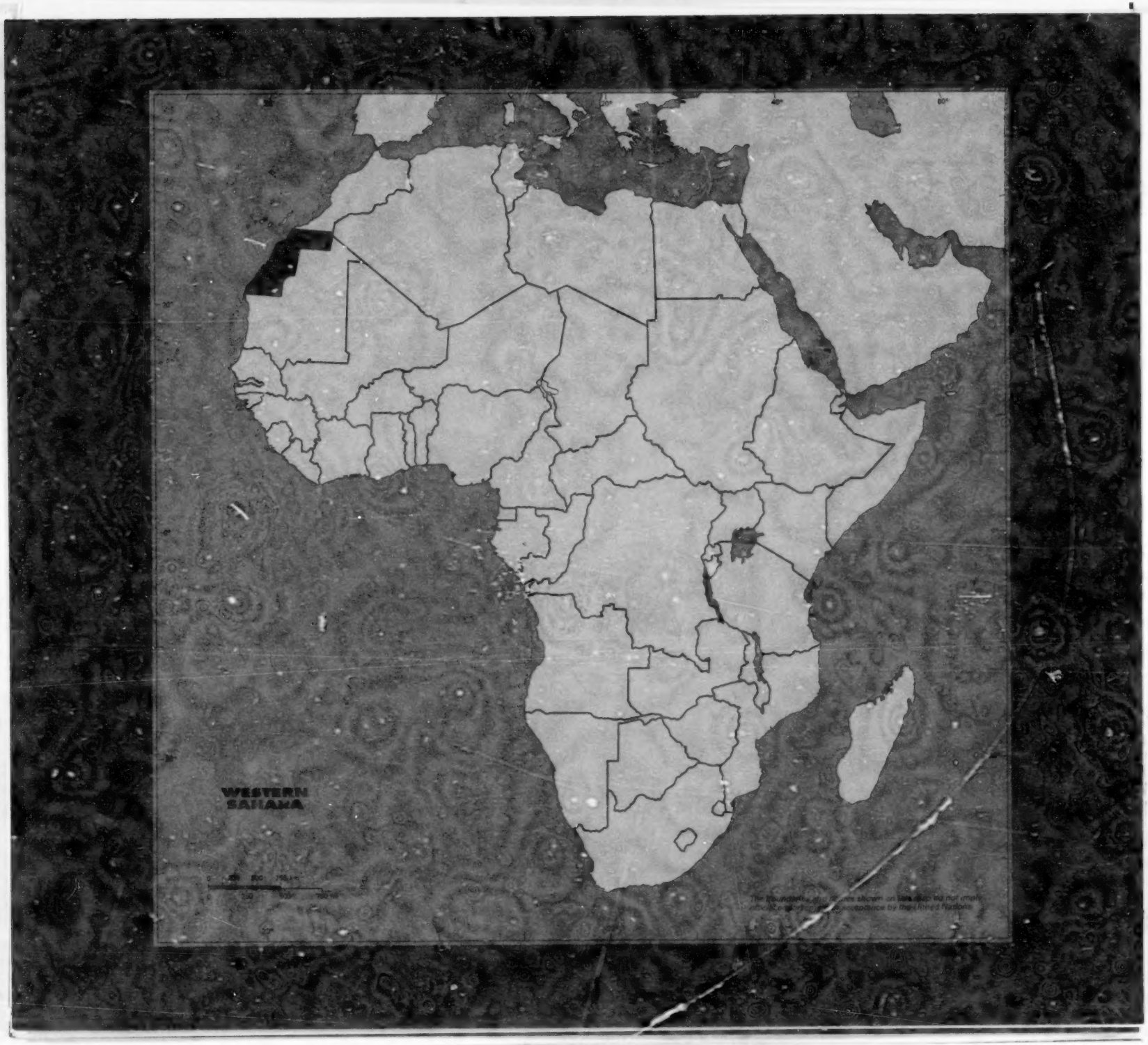
WESTERN SAHARA

tative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Johannes Manz (Switzerland), acting under the authority of the Secretary-General and, as necessary, on instructions from and in consultation with him, will have sole and exclusive authority over all matters with regard to the organization and conduct of the referendum.

TIMING

Resolution 690 stipulates that the transitional period is to begin no later than 16 weeks after the General Assembly approves the MINURSO budget. The budget was approved on 17 May 1991 by Assembly resolution 45/266. The estimated duration of the transitional period is 20 weeks beginning with the coming into effect of the cease-fire and ending with the proclamation of the results of the referendum. As soon as the results have been proclaimed, the Special Representative will begin to reduce the number of United Nations personnel in Western Sahara. The Special Representative and his remaining civilian and military staff will complete their withdrawal as soon as possible after all the tasks assigned to them by the Security Council have been satisfactorily carried out. It is envisaged that MINURSO will remain in Western Sahara for up to six weeks after the proclamation of results.

MAIN TASKS

Following the announcement of a cease-fire (D-Day), according to the plan, MINURSO was to verify the reduction of Moroccan troops; monitor the confinement of Moroccan and Frente POLISARIO troops to designated locations; take steps with the parties to ensure the release of all Western Saharan political prisoners or detainees; oversee the exchange of prisoners of war through the International Committee of the Red Cross; implement the repatriation programme through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); identify and register qualified voters; organize and ensure a free referendum; and proclaim the results.

STRUCTURE

MINURSO consists of the Special Representative and his office, and civilian, security and military units. It is to function as an integrated operation under the overall authority of the Special Representative. The Civilian Unit includes three components: personnel of an Identification Commission and a Referendum Commission; a component to implement the repatriation programme; and a component responsible for all administrative matters pertaining to the mission. The Unit consists largely of personnel from the United Nations system. Its repatriation component consists of UNHCR personnel. However, it will also be necessary to ask Governments to contribute a significant number of qualified personnel to assist in the organization and conduct of the referendum.

According to the plan, in performing its functions MINURSO is to act with complete impartiality. It will be taking on responsibilities unequalled in similar operations in the past, in particular with regard to the referendum,

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A profile of Western Sahara in the standard format used in preceding chapters is not included in this booklet. This is largely because of the sensitive political situation facing the United Nations and the Secretary-General in the delicate final phase of solving the question of Western Sahara. The reader may find it useful, however, to refer to the information below on current efforts of the international community in the form of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The same sensitivity applies to the accompanying map, which does not carry details in the format found in the other maps.

Establishment of MINURSO on 29 April 1991 was the culmination of 25 years of United Nations involvement with the situation in Western Sahara, dating back to a General Assembly resolution of December 1966 on the then Spanish Sahara.

BACKGROUND

In 1985, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in cooperation with the Chairman of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), initiated a joint mission of good offices in the search for a solution of the question of Western Sahara. On 11 August 1988, the Secretary-General and the Special Envoy of the OAU Chairman presented, in separate meetings, to the parties to the conflict in Western Sahara—namely Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO)—a document referred to as "the settlement proposals".

The document contained proposals for a just and definitive solution of the question of Western Sahara in conformity with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). This would be accomplished by means of a cease-fire and the holding of a referendum without military or administrative constraints to enable the people of Western Sahara, in exercise of their right to self-determination, to choose between independence and integration with Morocco.

On 27 June 1990, the Security Council, in its resolution 658, approved a report of the Secretary-General on the situation concerning Western Sahara, which contained the full text of the settlement proposals as accepted by the two parties on 30 August 1988 as well as an outline of the plan provided by the Secretary-General in order to implement those proposals. Following a second report amplifying the plan, the Security Council, on 29 April 1991, adopted resolution 690 establishing MINURSO.

GOAL

The purpose of the referendum is to enable the people of Western Sahara to choose freely between integration with Morocco and independence. The Special Represen-

the organization and conduct of which are the sole and exclusive responsibility of the United Nations. In the past, the United Nations role in similar efforts has been limited to supervision, verification or observation.

At full strength, the military component is expected to consist of approximately 1,695 personnel. About 100 police officers of the Security Unit are to be deployed in the mission area by D-Day in order to facilitate the work of the Identification Commission, and a further 200 will be phased into the Territory before the repatriation programme begins. The civilian component will range in size from about 800 to 1,000 personnel depending upon requirements of the various phases of the transitional period.

CONDITIONS

The Secretary-General, in his statement to the Security Council, observed that four essential conditions needed to be met for MINURSO to be able to discharge its responsibilities effectively and with complete impartiality: MINURSO must at all times have the full support of the Security Council; it must operate with the full cooperation of the two parties; it must be able to count fully on the cooperation and support of the neighbouring countries, namely, Algeria and Mauritania; and the necessary financial resources must be provided by Member States in full and in a timely manner.

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OVERALL COST

On 17 May 1991, the General Assembly by resolution 45/266 approved, in principle, the budgetary estimates for MINURSO proposed by the Secretary-General. The estimates amounted to about $200 million overall, including some $34 million in voluntary contributions for UNHCR repatriation activities.